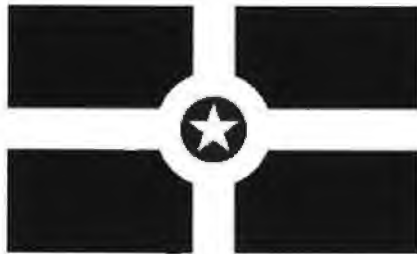# MERRITT MOVES

Initiatives for a Safer Indianapolis

JUNE 1, 2019

INTRODUCTION

Citizens in cities want to be and feel safe. They want to be able to enjoy the conveniences of city life without the worry of crime. Municipalities provide a variety of services to their citizens, some of these services are for convenience, others are for broader public good, and arguably the most important deal with safety and security. Law enforcement, investigation, firefighting, emergency medical services, emergency planning, special event management, criminal justice, and communications are among the critical public safety services. Garbage collection, constructing, repairing, and plowing roads and other infrastructures, public transportation, and public recreation (parks, bicycle paths, etc.) are among the key non-emergency services. Permitting, weights and measures, code enforcement, and land use planning (zoning) constitute some of the key regulatory services.

While all of these services are important, circumstances can sometimes elevate the importance of one or more, for example after a significant storm. Most residents feel that public safety services are the most important of all municipal services. Many public safety services are time critical. Prompt answering of 911 call; prompt dispatching; adequate staffing; short response time; proper training, and proper equipment; can all impact the outcome of any particular call for service.

Public safety in a major metropolitan area is big business – in Indianapolis accounting for more than half of municipal employees (1200 sworn fire fighters, 1700 sworn police, and approximately 400 civilians among the public safety departments) and the largest share of the budget, $700 million in 2019. The Indianapolis Fire Department responded to almost 170,000 calls for service in 2018.[1] There were approximately 105,000 calls for emergency medical services. The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police responded to 450,000 calls for service in 2018.[2]

The public has high expectations for public safety. These expectations are driven by emotion, media, popular culture, and by the sensational and sometimes salacious nature of crime components of public safety. Despite the presence of various metrics for public safety--response times, clearance rates, conviction rates, sentences, calls for service, budgets, staffing, and incident rates--most gauge public safety using more ambiguous means.

Of the various factors that color perceptions of safety, fear is most common. Few people are able to accurately articulate these fears. Fear is a useful survival tool in many circumstances. Fear is also used to drive public policy decisions and is commonly found at the heart of policy decisions, public and private, concerning public safety. Perceptions of safety are key to viable communities. . Few are skilled at measuring risk[3] Factors known to increase fear are victimization, media coverage, social media posts, and general social interaction.
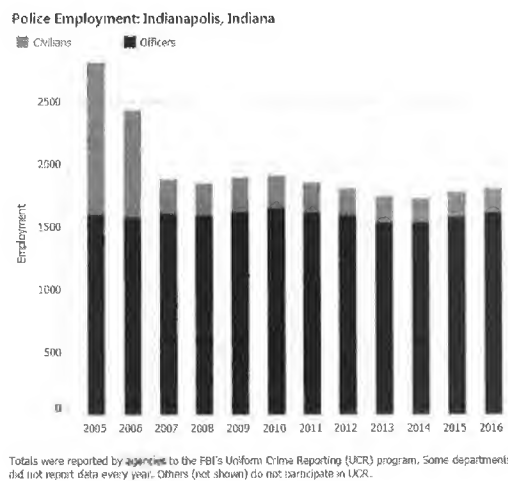
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[1] https://www.indy.gov/activity/fire-department-statistics
[2] IMPD Annual Report
[3] Gavin DeBecker *Fear Less*

DEMOGRAPHICS AND HISTORY

Indianapolis, Indiana is the thirteenth largest city in the United States covering 368 square miles with a population of approximately 873,000. The population of the Indianapolis metropolitan area is approximately 2,004,000.[4]

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department employs approximately 1700 sworn officers[5] and approximately 250 civilians.[6] Professor James McCabe has published a helpful treatise on staffing models and analysis for the International City Management Association (ICMA). McCabe lists a variety of factors related to effective policing including actual patrol time, report and documentation time, deployment hours, and general staffing considerations.[7] Governing Magazine has performed a comprehensive analysis of police staffing.[8]

Police Employment: Indianapolis, Indiana

Totals were reported by agencies to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. Some departments did not report data every year. Others (not shown) do not participate in UCR.

Indianapolis appears to be under-policed for the size of the city, particularly when compared with similarly sized cities Columbus, Ohio, St. Louis, Missouri, and Louisville, Kentucky, all of which have more per capita police.

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department responded to just under a half million calls for service in 2018. 2019 statistics filed with the FBI showed an overall 12% decrease in crime and a 6% decrease in violent crime for the first several months of 2019 compared to the same period for 2018.[9] In 2017 there were 1334 crimes reported for each 100,000 residents making the city the twelfth most dangerous in America.[10] During the past three years, homicides have topped 150 per year. Media reports regularly feature these incidents which lead to increased

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[4] http://www.city-data.com/city/Indianapolis-Indiana.html

[5] 1700 officers are authorized. Retirements and recruit classes make the actual count somewhat fluid

[6] https://www.indy.gov/agency/indianapolis-metropolitan-police-department
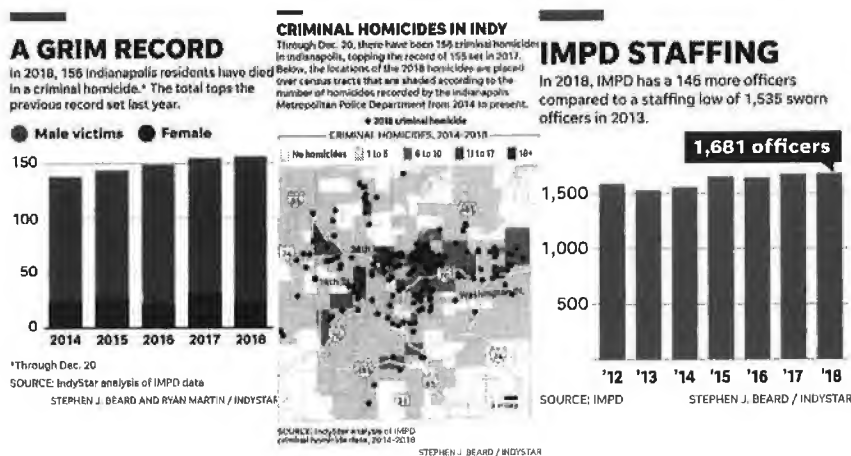
[7] https://icma.org/sites/default/files/305747_Analysis%20of%20Police%20Department%20Staffing%20_%20McCabe.pdf

[8] https://www.governing.com/gov-data/safety-justice/police-officers-employment-data-by-city-department.html

[9] https://cbs4indy.com/2019/02/27/impd-stats-show-indys-crime-rate-is-dropping/

[10] https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/the-most-dangerous-cities-in-america/28/

fear in the community. Moreover there appear to be trends among homicides, including location, time of day, and apparent motive.[11]

A GRIM RECORD

In 2018, 156 Indianapolis residents have died in a criminal homicide.* The total tops the previous record set last year.

- Male victims - Female

150

100

50

0

2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

*Through Dec. 20

SOURCE: IndyStar analysis of IMPD data

STEPHEN J. BEARD AND RYAN MARTIN / INDYSTAR

CRIMINAL HOMICIDES IN INDY

Through Dec. 20, there have been 156 criminal homicides in Indianapolis, topping the record of 155 set in 2017. Below, the locations of the 2018 homicides are placed over census tracts that are shaded according to the number of homicides recorded by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department from 2014 to present.

♦ 2018 criminal homicide

CRIMINAL HOMICIDES, 2014-2018

No homicides 1 to 5 6 to 10 11 to 17 18+

SOURCE: IndyStar analysis of IMPD criminal homicide data, 2014-2018

STEPHEN J. BEARD / INDYSTAR

IMPD STAFFING

In 2018, IMPD has a 146 more officers compared to a staffing low of 1,535 sworn officers in 2013.

1,681 officers

1,500

1,000

500

'12 '13 '14 '15 '16 '17 '18

SOURCE: IMPD   STEPHEN J. BEARD / INDYSTAR

There are many factors that lead to criminal behavior and as a result there are no simple solutions. Solutions must be multi-faceted, comprehensive, and multi-dimensional in focus. What follows are a series of policy considerations for the community to consider.

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[11] https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2018/12/23/indianapolis-crime-homicide-problem-explained-6-charts/1975426002/

LEADERSHIP

The public safety organizations have long been supervised by civilians. Civilian oversight of law enforcement has been a hallmark of policing in the United States. From the inception of the Indianapolis Police Department in 1863 through 2015 there was direct civilian supervision over the police and fire departments. This supervision was in the form of a Director of Public Safety, a mayoral appointee who coupled with the Board of Public Safety comprised of mayoral and council appointees governed the departments. The position Director of Public Safety was abolished in 2015 resulting in the chiefs of the respective departments reporting directly to the mayor. The theory behind eliminating the Director of Public Safety was that the mayor would be more accountable to the citizens without an additional bureaucratic layer. An underlying assumption was that senior leadership candidates had the necessary skill sets and training to manage complex multi-million dollar organizations.[12]

Discipline is meted out by the chief of each department. A civilian Merit Board, comprised of appointees by the mayor, city council, and the respective unions, hears discipline cases and renders decisions about significant discipline and termination.

Complaints against police officers are investigated by the Citizen's Complaint Office which is staffed and administered by civilians.

MERRITT MOVE – Appoint a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety

To address the critical need for strategic leadership and sophisticated management a Deputy Mayor will be appointed to focus exclusively on public safety. This position will have direct authority over all facets of public safety including police, fire, and emergency medicine. This position will provide strategic direction to the departments and will serve as a key focal point in the administration.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance the existing system of leadership training and development within each unit of public safety. Seek accredited mechanisms and templates to further enhance leadership positions and groom qualified candidates for future leadership assignments.

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[12] https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248573.pdf
See also https://inpublicsafety.com/2017/08/what-makes-an-effective-law-enforcement-leader/

STAFFING, TRAINING, RECRUITING

Regardless how many officers are authorized, the dramatic rise in retirements during the past several years have created a staffing shortage. A number of factors have led to this increase in retirements: public dissatisfaction; low morale; increased work load; age; and economic factors. There is a perpetual need to recruit and train new officers to address staffing shortages. Moreover there is a lengthy timeline to properly train officers before they are able to adequately perform police functions. New hires have barely kept pace with retirements.

MERRITT MOVE – Develop a program of lateral hiring and recruiting to speed the increase of staff.

MERRITT MOVE – Evaluate compensation of officers in advance of next contract.

MERRITT MOVE – Hire an additional 150 police officers annually until staffing achieves desired levels.

MERRITT MOVE – Hire additional Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians.

MERRITT MOVE – Work with the Sheriff to hire and train additional dispatchers.

MERRITT MOVE – Continue to improve recruiting within the community to improve the demographic match of officers with community demographics. Explore enhancing recruiting with professional recruiters.

MERRITT MOVE – Design and construct a comprehensive training facility to train all disciplines within public safety including police, fire, emergency medical, and communications. This facility should operate in a similar fashion to area higher education institutions with routine recruit training and rotating incumbent and specialty training. Implement distance learning and technology based training wherever possible.

EQUIPMENT

Modern public safety relies heavily on a variety of specialty tools. These include personal protective equipment, communications devices, computers, firearms, cars, trucks, ambulances, aircraft and related tools. For many years Indianapolis was at the forefront of the industry utilizing state of the art equipment. Economic pressures and management decisions in recent years have caused a dramatic decline in the quality and condition of the critical facilities and equipment used by public safety personnel.

MERRITT MOVE – Develop a plan to replace 500 police cars and 5 pieces of fire apparatus each year. Use sophisticated financial tools to normalize this process and allow stable budgeting.

MERRITT MOVE – Acquire body cameras and necessary storage for all operations officers. Develop transparent policies for access to collected video in conjunction with justice system and union partners.

MERRITT MOVE – Implement Global Positioning Systems for dispatching of all public safety resources.

MERRITT MOVE – Replace the 50 year old helicopter.

MERRITT MOVE – Assess the condition of all personal protective equipment used by city employees across all departments and develop a replacement plan.

FACILITIES

The various units of public safety operate over 50 facilities for operations, training, roll calls, and other functions. Some facilities have been replaced, others are in critical need or repair, renovation, or replacement. It is not clear what decision processes have been used to close facilities.

MERRITT MOVE – Assess the condition and needs of all public safety facilities and develop a plan to budget for renovation, repair, or replacement of those facilities based on the assessment.

OPERATIONS

Staffing shortages have produced challenging deployments for effective operations in law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services. These shortages have resulted in moves away from proven beat policing strategies. Adding staff will assist commanders with these shortages but more must be done to address fundamental work flows and processes.

An additional challenge is that much of officer time is spent generating reports that benefit third parties.[13] Among the casualties of short staffing is effective community policing. Officers must have time to develop and maintain relationships with the citizens they serve.[14]

MERRITT MOVE – Refine beat policing and aggressively develop relationships with citizens.

MERRITT MOVE – Pursue technologies to streamline officer tasks like report writing and integrate these technologies into dispatch and record management systems.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance video monitoring, social media monitoring and the use of artificial intelligence for crime interdiction.

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[13] https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248476.pdf
[14] https://www.nlc.org/article/6-essential-tenets-for-effective-community-policing

INVESTIGATIONS

A key factor in suppressing crime is investigation. Among the challenges created by the attrition of personnel has been the loss of highly trained investigators in various areas of the departments. Structural changes within the investigative units have not always yielded favorable results. Moreover criminals are increasingly regional in their activities which requires concomitant changes in law enforcement approach.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance investigative ranks with apprenticeship and immersive training.

MERRITT MOVE – Reinforce specialty investigation units including Core Narcotics, Homicide & Robbery, Sex Offenses, Arson, Metro Drug, Gangs, and White Collar, and Computer Crimes.[15]

MERRITT MOVE – Further enhance the use of artificial intelligence and data analysis across the region and the Indianapolis doughnut counties.

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[15] https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=ccj_articles
See also http://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/47588859.pdf

GUN VIOLENCE/HOMICIDE

The Indianapolis homicide trend has been creeping upward in recent years. Political rhetoric has done little to stem the violence. There is a nexus between drug trafficking and homicides. There is also often a nexus between the perpetrator and the victim.[16] Persons illegally possessing and using firearms and those who engage in use of or distribution of illegal drugs are far more likely to be victims of homicide. Moreover many homicides are concentrated in several areas of the community.

CRIMINAL HOMICIDES IN INDY

Through Dec. 20, there have been 156 criminal homicides in Indianapolis, topping the record of 155 set in 2017. Below, the locations of the 2018 homicides are placed over census tracts that are shaded according to the number of homicides recorded by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department from 2014 to present.

● 2018 criminal homicide

CRIMINAL HOMICIDES, 2014-2018

☐ No homicides ▦ 1 to 5 ▪ 6 to 10 ▪ 11 to 17 ▪ 18+
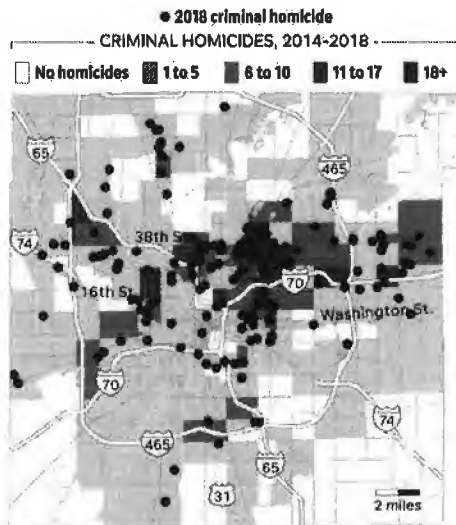
SOURCE: IndyStar analysis of IMPD criminal homicide data, 2014-2018

STEPHEN J. BEARD / INDYSTAR

MERRITT MOVE – Coordinate gun interdiction among divisions and agencies with federal and state partners.

MERRITT MOVE – Strategically deploy enforcement and investigative resources based on crime data analysis.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance efforts to eradicate root causes of gun violence including narcotics and domestic disputes.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance training and development of homicide investigators to stem the loss of experienced detectives.

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[16] https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2018/12/23/indianapolis-crime-homicide-problem-explained-6-charts/1975426002/

GUNS

Many violent crimes involve guns. Guns are easily obtained and are frequently used to resolve disputes, often with deadly consequences. "Most crime is committed by a small group of offenders at a small group of places," said David Weisburd, a criminologist who's studied focused deterrence. He added that it's important to look beyond traditional law enforcement methods to bring wraparound resources directly to the people who need them.

In a related problem, many suicides involve guns. Accidents and accidental discharges of firearms by children has also produced tragedies. A 2019 study from the University of Michigan estimates that firearm injuries are the second leading cause of death among children.[17] Many tragedies take place each year due to unsecured firearms.[18] Health departments and police departments have implemented gun buy-back programs, but research suggests that these programs have mixed results.[19]

More than 80 American cities have implemented focused deterrence since Boston pioneered it as "Operation Ceasefire" in the 1990s. A recent review of two dozen evaluations found that the strategy was associated with an overall reduction in crime, including a 63 percent reduction in youth homicides and a 44 percent reduction in youth gun assaults in one high-risk police district.

MERRITT MOVE – Trade laptop or tablet computers for guns. We will work with large institutions and computer companies to obtain laptop and tablet computers to trade for guns. "You can use a laptop to get a job." A young man told an Indianapolis reporter.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance the availability of gun locks and lock boxes – free – to secure handguns to prevent tragedies. Work with legislators to require that guns be secured.

MERRITT MOVE – Develop a multi-faceted program involving mentoring, therapy and a campaign with high-profile sports figures to help young people deal with anger and trauma and provide alternatives to guns to solve issues and problems.

MERRITT MOVE – Develop a focused deterrence program focusing on the areas and people most likely to use guns.

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[17] https://www.thetrace.org/2019/02/kids-gun-violence-strategies/

[18] https://www.indystar.com/story/opinion/columnists/tim-swarens/2018/12/14/indianapolis-homicide-gun-violence-facebook-murder-resolve-conflicts-tim-swarens/2299520002/

[19] https://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/gov-cities-rethink-gun-buyback-programs.html

NARCOTICS

The very factors which make Indianapolis attractive for multi-modal freight and logistics also make it attractive to drug trafficking. Narcotics can be moved via traditional shipping channels, on interstate highways, and also through the city itself.[20] Some gateway drugs can lead to addictions which can lead to exponential increase in drug use and trafficking. These factors coupled with the relatively low cost for some narcotics have led to significant increases in drug-related violence.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance drug interdiction capabilities; enhance investigation resources including Metro Drug Task Force and Core Narcotics Units. Integrate district-level narcotics investigations into central crime analysis.

MERRITT MOVE – Explore alternative means of addressing addiction.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

There is a clear nexus between substance abuse and crime. Many offenders have substance abuse histories. Some profit from the sale of illicit drugs and narcotics. Many others have mental health issues. A comprehensive approach is required to address these issues. Some jurisdictions have reported success by employing strategies to address both substance abuse and mental illness.[21]

MERRITT MOVE – Work with Justice System partners to implement an evidence-based system of substance abuse screening, intervention, and treatment.

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[20] High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. Drug Market Analysis. Midwest. Product No. 2007-R0813-015
[21] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5428163/

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM INTERFACE

The justice systems is a critical interface with law enforcement. At present there is insufficient jail capacity, inadequate court capacity, and a general disconnect among the justice system partners. Many factors impact the case processing capacity of the justice system including staffing of courts, prosecutors, public defenders, and probation. The facilities are also critical to the efficient operation of the system.

A related problem caused by capacity limits is the ability to house dangerous offenders once arrested. Police officers frequently find people they have arrested are released before the officer has completed the related paperwork and reports.

MERRITT MOVE – Continue to aggressively support the design and construction of the Justice Complex and support the inclusion of all stakeholder agencies which comprise the justice system.

MERRITT MOVE – Work with judges and other stakeholders to keep dangerous people in jail.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Behavioral health resources have been dramatically reduced due to budget shortages. Concurrently there is a shortage of behavioral health workers and therapists.[22] This shortage has resulted in field police officers being called upon to deliver behavioral health interventions, evaluations, and responses.

MERRITT MOVE – Work with justice system and health partners to enhance wages and opportunities to increase mental health capacities within the community. Explore the creation of a behavioral health response capability to work with public safety resources.

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[22] https://health.usnews.com/health-care/patient-advice/articles/2018-05-25/whats-the-answer-to-the-shortage-of-mental-health-care-providers
See also https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity has a disproportionate impact on lower income residents. It can lead to criminal activity, truancy, and other problems. Moreover it is a fundamental need and right. No one in a modern city should be hungry. No child should go to bed hungry and no senior citizen should have to worry about hunger. A variety of approaches involving food banks, SNAP program bonuses for fruits and vegetables have proven effective in stemming food insecurity.[23] Addressing food insecurity has proven to be an effective crime reduction strategy in Indianapolis.[24]

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance the neighborhood food pantry programs in those neighborhoods with the lowest incomes. Support food bank partners to ensure long-term viability of these programs.

MERRITT MOVE – Explore the creation of mobile food pantries and food pantry routes to address known food deserts.

MERRITT MOVE – Establish small markets (food bodegas) city-wide and modeled upon the new bodega at Flanner House and those in place in many large cities around the world. These bodegas are easily managed, have low overhead and can often utilize fresh, recaptured food while providing employment opportunities.

 MERRITT MOVE -- Food Rescue[25] Work with IPS, Township and Charter Schools to ensure that those in need have access to the Food Rescue Program.

 MERRITT MOVE -- Establish Urban Gardens which will provide learning and food options throughout the city. This program will incorporate the lessons learned from Martha Hoover and Kimbal Musk.

 MERRITT MOVE – Convene a Food Security Summit which will give all those organizations with a stake in food supply, food security, hunger, health, and education to further the work that has already been done to combat hunger in this city.

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[23] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5230819/
[24] https://www.indystar.com/story/news/2017/03/19/indy-police-armed-food-fight-crime-build-trust/99209366/
See also https://www.cicf.org/2017/08/15/tale-two-counties-food-insecurity/
[25] The Food Rescue Program recovers sealed food items that are not consumed and redistributes them.

HOMELESSNESS[26]

"Many are one problem away from homelessness.[27]" Addiction, behavioral health issues, and under employment all play roles in homelessness. Some of these issues create public safety issues due to panhandling or property crimes. Some recent public/private initiatives have shown promise including a program that puts homeless to work picking up trash. Other initiatives address affordable housing through the use of shipping containers and other structures. OutReach has advanced a proposal to build such housing in Indianapolis. The core issues with the homeless are a lack of affordable housing; lack of transportation; lack of community among the homeless (a sense of belonging); and lack of employment at a living wage. There are serious disincentives to work and many employers only allow employees to work part time to avoid triggering health care and other benefit requirements.

A number of communities have has success with programs through initial shelter, stabilization, housing, and support structures.[28] Traditional responses have used "linear residential models" or "continuum of care" approaches with mixed results. Several communities have achieved success by eliminating many of the forms and paperwork that produced the homeless situation.[29]

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness released a 10 point strategy in 2016 that examines the problems and offers meaningful solutions.[30]

MERRITT MOVE – Work closely with human service agencies and private sector to address the core factors enumerated above.

MERRITT MOVE – Devote leadership resources to implementing homelessness prevention and response.

MERRITT MOVE – Explore the creation of permanent housing solutions using non-traditional models.

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[26] Homelessness is a complex subject and is mentioned here as a part of a public safety policy. This is not a dispositive policy on the subject.

[27] Eric Howard Founder and former CEO OutReach Center for Homeless Teens, Indianapolis

[28] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/ending-homelessness/proven-solutions/

[29] https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/02/housing-first-solution-to-homelessness-utah/

[30] https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/10_Strategies_to_End_Chronic_Homelessness.pdf

EMPLOYMENT/YOUTH EMPLOYMENT[31]

"Idle time is the devil's plaything."[32] Unemployed and under employed youth often find themselves on a path to criminal activity. Young persons aged 16-24 face disproportionate unemployment and these initial challenges can lead to lasting employment scarring. Moreover there can be significant economic and social impacts on the broader economy of a community. [33] Indianapolis has developed several employment initiatives for school aged people during breaks and for those who are not in school. These programs have achieved some measure of success in preventing criminality.

MERRITT MOVE – Enhance youth employment programs to include partnerships with technical training programs and institutions of technical and higher learning.

MERRITT MOVE -- Support collaboration between the workforce development system, higher education, and employers to encourage opportunities for students to simultaneously earn credit for work-based learning.

MERRITT MOVE – Establish a clearinghouse for jobs in Indianapolis to link potential workers and employers.

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[31] Employment, un-employment, and under employment are a complex subject and are mentioned here as a part of a public safety policy. This is not a dispositive policy on the subject.
[32] Proverbs 16:27-29
[33] https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Brookings_JacobsUnemployment_To-Print.pdf